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ABSTRACT

This study examined student and instructor reflection upon a 2-year teacher education seminar designed to provide experiential and theoretical grounding in democratic pedagogy. Through conversation-as-research, instructors interpreted group dynamics in their conversations during breaks, lunch hours, and evenings throughout the seminar. The central issues guiding the research-in action were: (1) how instructors might co-construct with students a 'democratic dynamic' in a seminar designed to present the topic in both content and method; and (2) how instructors might balance the goals of the seminar content with its process and with students' needs. Seminar participants were mostly graduate students and some undergraduate students; the graduate students were practicing teachers. Findings revealed that collaborative instruction was critical, that conversation was the principal medium for negotiated change, and that certain critical conversations were central to the development of democratic learning communication. (Contains 34 references.) (CK)

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DEMOCRATIC PEDAGOGY AS CONTENT AND METHOD IN TEACHER EDUCATION: CONVERSATION AS RESEARCH-IN-ACTION

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Summary

This action research study examines both student and instructor reflection upon two sessions of an intensive graduate seminar entitled, "Creating Democratic Classrooms and Communities." A comparison of practices over two years discusses the pedagogical practices and content used in the two iterations of the seminar. Journals and reflective papers by both participants and instructors provided data for the study.

Objectives

This study examined the meanings constructed by both instructors and participants in a Teacher Education seminar designed to provide both experiential and theoretical grounding in democratic pedagogy (Kreisberg, 1988). Through conversation-as-research, instructors interpreted participant interactions and group dynamics in their conversations during breaks, lunch hours, and evenings throughout the intensive seminar (Feldman, 1995). Our medium of research-in-action: conversation, made explicit our reflection-in-action as reflective practitioners (Hollingsworth, 1993; Feldman, 1995; Schon, 1983). During these "occurent" conversations between the instructors, our teaching-as-research interpretation, conflict resolution, problem-solving, adjustments, interventions, and strategies were all negotiated (Duckworth, 1987; Hollingsworth, 1990; Feldman, 1995).

The central questions guiding the research-in-action were: 1) How do instructors co-construct with students a "democratic dynamic" in a seminar designed to present the topic in both content and method? 2) How do instructors balance the goals of the seminar content with its process and with students' needs?

In the seminar syllabi, the instructors stated a shared goal of co-creating a democratic learning community. Participants and instructors shared facilitation, participated in class meetings, and wrote in "Process Journals" daily. From the instructors' conversations, and journals, and from

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the participants' "Process Papers," and written evaluations, an interpretation of critical conversations relevant to democratic practice is drawn.

Perspectives

Conversation as Action Research

The definition of action research from which this study may be viewed comes from the work of John Elliott who states that action research is "the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it" (1991, p.69). We locate our action research in the model developed by Altrichter, Posch, and Somekh (1993). Their model has four basic steps, and a discussion of our research process follows the model below.

(A) Finding a Starting Point

(B) Clarifying the situation

(C) Developing action strategies and putting them into practice

(D) Making teachers' knowledge public

In this model, steps B and C have a recursive dynamic. We thus locate our starting point (A) in a "long and serious conversation" (Feldman, 1994) concerning our efforts to incorporate democratic practice into the teacher education courses we were teaching (Feldman, 1994). Within those conversations, we tested ideas and encouraged one another to continue to enhance our normal practice.

Documentation for the current study begins with our development of the seminar syllabus, and conversations in which we clarified the situation (B) were the ongoing and occurent reflection-in action and conversation-as-research. Teaching-as-research we conducted in the course of teaching and adjusting the seminar toward improving the quality of action within it (C) (Elliott, 1991). These were the strategies developed and put into practice (C). This report, then, is our action research process of making our knowledge public (Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 1993).

Collaboration Through Conversation

While the content of this paper concerns a collaborative construction of democratic pedagogy, the medium or method through which that focus is viewed is through the essential conversations between the instructors of a teacher education course entitled: Creating Democratic Learning Communities/Classrooms. In our comments below, our theoretical and practical

approaches are presented. The process through which those perspectives were constructed was through the medium of conversation and conversation-in-action.

Instructors in Conversation

Because we co-facilitated the course, many of the decision and problem-solving processes that would otherwise be "invisible" or contained within the mind or reflections of a sole instructor, were instead explicit communicative and collaborative acts. In these conversations, our analysis of events and possible courses of action became a visible phenomenon of teaching as research (Hollingsworth, 1990; Duckworth, 1987).

This paper is an effort to make certain processes "visible" as co-instructors collaborated to define democratic pedagogy in their actions and responses to students' needs in a "democratic" teacher-education course. In the context of our conversation as research-in-action, we found many similarities with the work of Sandra Hollingsworth (1990). In her paper, "Coming to View Teaching as Research: A Feminist Perspective on an Epistemological Pedagogy for Teacher Educators" Hollingsworth expresses her assumption that teaching is "the best definition of reflection.

> It represents critical thought, but change as a result of critical thought...I believe that thoughtful teachers regularly question their teaching and their students learning, collect information to inform themselves about those questions, experiment, document, summarize and try again...Unlike inquiry performed and reported by university scholars, teachers' reflective processes are rarely observable to others. Within teachers' daily lives, in fact, they may perceive neither time nor reward for articulating the processes--even to themselves. (1990, p. 2)

In our research-in-action, conversation was the medium in which we were able to critically reflect, to collect, share information, to compare interpretations, to deconstruct, to summarize, to disagree, to re-interpret, adjust, raise and resolve conflict, and to negotiate intervention strategies and to develop new trials. These conversations were critical to our goals for the course, and for this study. These were:

1) How do instructors co-construct with students a "democratic dynamic" in a seminar designed to present the topic in both content and method?

2) How do instructors balance the goals of the seminar content with its process and with students' needs?

We based these interpretations on evidence gathered from in-class and out-of-class conversations we had with one another and with the participants in the class[1].

As in Hollingsworth's experience, we as instructors were often engaged by the participants in their crises of faith (or crises of trust). Others have identified these crises as forms of "resistance" (Erickson, 1986; Giroux, 1988) In Hollingsworth's experience, they manifested as objections such as, "I didn't come here to listen to my peers. I came here to listen to you. Please tell us what we need to know.'" (Hollingsworth, 1990: 21).

From prior classroom teaching experience using democratic practices, we viewed objections of this kind as "crises of faith." These crises were anticipated as the shift of the locus of power became more imminent. The instructors, too, anticipated their own crises of faith, but through collaborative conversations, were able to support one another in these crises in order to sustain against the temptation to "go back to the book."

Each crisis, as it manifested, became a problem in democratic pedagogy, and it was in the context of the instructors' conversations that these crises were transformed into responsive actions of democratic practice. This process we viewed as teaching-as-research and is described further in our Findings and Implications.

Student-Participant Conversations

In the seminar, we often structured discussions held in large groups. As participants recognized equity issues, participation in smaller cooperative groups became important scenes of participant conversation. From our prior experience, we had found that large group participation, when unstructured, tended to become reproductions of inequitable social relations (Feldman, 1995).

In prior practice, in secondary and in graduate teacher education classrooms, we had operated on theoretical assumptions and perspectives that had informed that practice. These had been based first in classroom practice based upon the work of Eliot Wigginton (1972; 1973) and later informed by the work of Dewey (1916), Freire (1987), Giroux (1988) Erickson (1986), Bloome & Willett (1991).

Our goal in structuring classroom interaction were to transform interactions from their tendency to simply reproduce social relations. Although this may appear as countersocialization (Giroux), we as instructors could not predict how the democratic learning community would evolve. In this way, we placed our trust in the process to transform both ourselves and the student-participants (Freire, 1987).

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[1] We use the term "participants" to describe the students in the class, most of whom were experienced teachers, and some of whom were graduate, post-baccalaureate, and undergraduate students enrolled in teacher education programs.

Therefore, we designed large group activities with specific participation formats in mind. These are listed in order of the frequency with which they were used.

- Class Meetings were moderated by a volunteer student moderator. There were additional roles of Recorder, Observer, and Timekeeper as desired.
- "Talking Stick," a technique that arises from Native American traditions, was used to ensure that each voice around the circle was systematically heard.
- "Fishbowl" technique was demonstrated as a participatory and listening skill activity.
- "Jigsaw" a co-operative learning technique was introduced in the first exercise.
- Games and Simulations were introduced early and used frequently in the seminar to promote interaction.
- Short Talks with class interaction, participation, and questions were used to introduce techniques and activities.

Many of these techniques were later practiced and demonstrated by the participants in sessions they led in collaborative groups.

The small group components were provided for in terms of class time, but were not managed in any way by the instructors. The small group opportunities were:

- Self-selected (by topic) collaborative activity-design groups that met daily;
- Walk and Talk pairs, rotated to enable each participant a one-on-one with each individual;
- random dyads, triads, and small groupings for various activities[2]

Components of a Classroom Community Centering on Democratic Education

In order to facilitate the implicit goal of the instructors, democratic practice components were structured to both share and shift the locus of power and responsibility for learning and instruction from the instructors to participants toward the co-construction of a democratic community of learners. Theory in democratic pedagogy (Goodman, 1992; Kelly, 1989; Wood, 1990; Lickona & Paradise, 1980; Lickona, 1992; Novak 1994) describes practices common to democratic classrooms.

While much theory encourages teachers to develop democratic pedagogy in classrooms, in the participants' prior experience as students, such practice was virtually absent. The teacher education seminars focused upon both experiential and theoretical approaches toward the establishment of a "democratic dynamic" (Dewey, 1916; Giroux, 1986; Kreisberg, 1992; Peck, 1987). Thus, the seminars under examination were designed to provide a knowledge base through experiential practice in the pedagogy of democratic classrooms.

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[2] In addition, many issues were apparently discussed in ad hoc small group conversations before being raised in Class Meetings. This was particularly the case for women participants who raised gender issues later in each seminar. This is described in the Findings.

In an effort to combine democratic ideology with sound educational practice, our greatest challenge was to demonstrate the principles of creating a democratic learning community by becoming one. To accomplish this, we designed the seminar with the following components which we then strove to model in our practice:

Building a Community of Trust
Teachers as Classroom Facilitators
Shared Democratic Leadership
Participation and Democratic Decision-making
Rules, Roles, and Responsibility
Conflict Resolution and Commitment to Community Goals
Ritual, Humor, and Stories

These are described in the following sections.

Building a Community of Trust

Grambs and Carr (1979) describe democratic education, as "a social system devoted to developing better human relations" (p. 73). Note the congruence with which this pedagogy and action research as Elliot defines it. Much of the theory supporting democratic education acknowledges that building a classroom "community" to advance democratic principles is paramount to curriculum content (Wood, 1988; Beane, 1990). Therefore, our course centered on building a democratic "community". The theoretical framework that shaped the curriculum for implementing a democratic learning community, combined Tyler's (1989) definition of a democratic society (given above) with Peck's components of what he describes as a "genuine community":

> ...there is respect for diversity and individualism... a variety of points of view is encouraged and freedom for members to express them... self-examination is necessary... a "safe" place and sense of trust are created within... the environment becomes a laboratory for personal disarmament... members can fight gracefully... the flow of leadership is routine. (1987, pp. 59-64)

The components in Peck's "community" clearly delineate democratic ideals for a learning environment. Building "community" in a group of individuals who come from a variety of backgrounds and interests takes considerable time and effort. Trust must be established from the beginning, as the "community" members learn to listen to others accepting their differences of perspective. Eventually, the community grows to respect each other for these differences. To accomplish this goal, one's approach to the role of "teacher" changes to the role of "facilitator".

Teachers as Classroom Facilitators

If our goal to develop a democratic learning community was to be met, our roles as instructors could not be autocratic. We therefore took the "facilitation" approach as the most conducive to the sharing of power with the participants. A "facilitator" model enables the practice of a "problem-posing" (Freire, 1987) approach to education. Used as a metaphor, the classroom is very much a laboratory open to inquiry. The role of a facilitator is not necessarily to provide answers to questions, but to provide an environment where students are free to question and further their own learning.

Facilitation requires specific skills for leading discussion in which students take part in critical thinking in addition to talking. These skills include: (1) asking the kinds of questions that stimulate students to explore alternative perspectives of an issue; (2) encouraging students to apply relevant factual information and sources to support their opinions; and (3) helping the group come to consensus on an issue.

Dialogue and Controversial Issues as Democratic Practice

Kreisberg (1991) describes some fundamental differences between debate and discussion, between argument and dialogue. Most familiar to our daily lives is argument, in which an individual with one opinion tries to convince another person they are right. In the context of a formal setting, this is called debating. He continues:

> The less familiar way is what we call discussing or creating dialogue. This approach involves communicating your own needs while also trying to understand what the other person is feeling or thinking. (p. 156)

One way students can practice their skills of creating dialogue is by a facilitated discussion of controversial issues or problem-posing topics. As teachers facilitate classroom discussion through problem-posing education, students are likely to engage in dialogue, the discourse of a democratic learning community. According to Freire:

> Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication, there can be no true education. (1987, p. 81)

Students can begin to think critically by listening to the opinions of others and by tolerating ambiguity on controversial issues. For example, they can learn to "step out" of their own perspectives for the purpose of understanding more fully the positions of others (Elbow, 1983; Berman, 1987). We found that this tolerance was best supported by the "Talking Stick."

Students must also learn to separate facts from opinions and apply those facts to support their statements. They also learn that issues can be complex, and that simple solutions to complicated problems are not always the best or practical solutions.

"Controversy is the cornerstone of democracy.... For without controversy, we could not articulate differences" (Thomashow, 1989, p. 66). A controversial issue can be any concern in which two or more perspectives can be taken. Whether or not students may be permitted to wear hats during class can be a controversial issue for one school, but not for another. By involvement in controversial issues in classroom dialogue, students may engage in the dynamics of democracy in practice, or what Kreisberg calls the "democratic dynamic" (1992). Moreover, because dialogue encourages teachers to participate with their students, they are also liberated to discover new ideas and enhance their own learning. Finally, students who observe their teachers as co-learners, may be encouraged to develop their leadership skills and share responsibilities for teaching and learning.

Shared Democratic Leadership in a Community of Learners

In a democracy the leadership is routinely shared by members of the community. In democratic learning environments all students should have equal opportunities to share leadership positions. In order to prepare students for leadership positions, they must have opportunities to practice them. There are many different types of leadership roles in classroom settings. For example, peer teaching, cooperative learning groups, and facilitators of discussions are leadership functions that many students may assume. In a democratic learning community, leadership roles are routinely shared by all members of the class. Moreover, this tenet reinforces the notion that equal opportunity and participation are crucial to democracy.

Participation and Democratic Decision Making

"A democracy can survive only by the participation of its members. Schools are expected to generate such participation" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 54). In a democratic classroom where participation is crucial, students taking leadership roles find ways that they can contribute to their learning communities. Students may also participate by making decisions concerning classroom rules for social behavior, and voicing their interests pertaining to curriculum activities and agenda. In democratic education, class meetings are often used as to include students in making significant decisions about their classroom community and daily activities. By providing an opportunity for all students to have their "voices" heard and acted upon, the process of class meeting may be an empowering experience for all students. The structure of class meeting strives to maintain equality for

all members. For example, in our democratic education course, participants struggled with how "consensus" in group decision making more effectively supported minority or unpopular opinions than did a decision made by "majority vote."

Rules, Roles, and Responsibility

Class meetings can provide opportunities for individuals to participate in a variety of roles and responsibilities. Rotation of responsibilities including that of moderator is a strategy for developing leadership and participation equitably. Other roles, such as recorder and observer may emerge as needs are recognized (Lickona & Paradise, 1980).

Conflict Resolution and Commitment to Community Goals

Even with a solid commitment to community goals, tensions and frustrations inevitably build within the group. However, these conflicts are necessary for the development of a healthy community. By resolving conflicts together, group members may learn more about themselves and each other, thereby strengthening their commitment to the community. The inclusion and practice of conflict resolution skills and strategies promotes trust and provides alternative means and perspectives on conflicts that arise. In the practice, participants may begin to view and respond in new ways to controversy and conflict (Davis & Salem, 1985; Kreidler, 1984; Johnson & Johnson, 1993). We found that these skills became more valued as a major component in our democratic practice.

Ritual, Humor, and Stories

During periods of intense problem solving, humor can be a valuable attribute to the group's spirit, by helping to maintain harmony. As groups become communities, rituals and stories (both serious and humorous) also become an important part of the community. A democratic community is created and maintained by individuals who are committed to group goals. Often the struggle of moving forward can be alleviated with the community's ability to implement creative problem solving strategies, conflict resolution, humor, and respect for diversity and each other.

Methods

As a qualitative case study, this research was conducted as action research by the instructors through frequent and "occurrent" conversations (Feldman, 1995). In the study, we as instructors conducted part of the research as reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983; Elliott, 1985, 1991), and in *ex post facto* reflection upon versions of syllabi, from our journals, notes, and reflective papers. Student-participant perspectives from journals and "Process Papers," evaluations, notes, audiotapes, and other documents were also analyzed as data for the study.

Participants

Collaborative Action Researchers

The primary participants in the action research were ourselves as instructors and as participants in the conversations which were the locus of our research-in-action. Both experienced secondary teachers, women doctoral candidates and student-teacher supervisors in a secondary teacher education program, we had worked in Social Studies teacher education to continue the work of our mentor, Seth Kreisberg who had died suddenly. Kreisberg, a founding member of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR), had conducted research and coursework in democratic pedagogy (Kreisberg, 1993), and sponsored the summer seminar entitled "Democratic Classrooms" in 1989.

In our separate but related responsibilities, we had begun what Allan Feldman has called a "long and serious conversation" (1994) about teaching, and especially about the nuances of incorporating democratic practice. It was through this conversation that a mutual trust and respect developed, and out of which our decision to co-facilitate a course on democratic practice grew.

Student Participants

The student-participants over the two years of the seminar were a combination of in-service and pre-service teachers, undergraduates, and students and providers in the public service professions (such as nursing, regional planning, human services, etc.). The following Table provides some information on the student-participant population. In the table, the classifications to the right of the total are subsets of the same group with the exception of the undergraduates, none of whom were education students[3].

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[3] There were certain equity issues that arose for undergraduates as full participants in the largely graduate level population. Because there were so few undergraduates, their individual resolutions with group membership were each unique, and are therefore not included among more general findings. Suffice it to say, though, that their student status posed certain equity issues.

Participant Population in Two Sections of a Seminar on Democratic Practice

Year 1	Undergrad (UG)	Post-Bacc.	Graduate	Total	Pre-service	In-service	Public service, Other/not UG
Female	0	5	4	9	(0)	(8)	(1)
Male	2	1	4	8	(1)	(3)	(1)
Year 2							
Female	2	4	5	11	(2)	(6)	(2)
Male	1	1	3	5	(0)	(3)	(1)
Totals	5	11	16	33	(3)	(20)	(5)

Data Collection and Analysis

In order to meet the goals of co-constructing a democratic learning community between instructors and participants, he seminar's intensive week-long, eight-to-four schedule required frequent conversations as a medium for:

- reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983)
- conversation-as-research (Feldman, 1995; Hollingsworth, 1990)
- teaching-as-research (Duckworth, 1987), and
- research-in-action

These conversations often resulted in adjustments to the curriculum to accommodate decisions made by the participants in the co-construction of their democratic dynamic. Thus, the instructors were participants in the learning community, but retained responsibility for balancing their goals for content and method, taking instruction from the student participants. We see therefore that the conversations between us as instructors represented a reflection-in-action process as manifested collaboratively. These conversations can be seen as the medium in which "occurent" change was made (Feldman, 1995). This change was often experimental in nature, while based in prior experience in other cases in our experience.

The conversation-as-research occurred in frequent and immediate conversations between the instructors. Critical issues and tensions arising from shifts in power relations and responsibility required rapid response. We found in our conversations the mutual support we needed for developing strategies to meet student needs in such a way as to redirect them to the democratic learning community as opposed to "solving" those problems in the role of instructors.

Changes and adjustments were negotiated in these conversations that occurred throughout the seminar during breaks, lunches, and after class each day. Specific adjustments and

conversations also occurred during the day, between activities, or on occasion during activities or in Class Meetings. These adjustments represent our teaching as research as interpreted from the Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh's Action Research model and from the work of Eleanor Duckworth. This teaching-as-research was documented in journals and "Process Papers" written by the instructors and some of the conversations were audiotaped.

Documentation in the form of original and revised versions of the syllabi reflect the curriculum adaptations we made during the course of the seminar. Between the Year 1 and Year 2 syllabi reflect what has been described as "cross course analysis" by Sandra Hollingsworth (1990). Changes in the syllabi reflect the dialectical nature of the seminar curriculum as the instructors responded to student participant needs. These adjustments and adaptations can be seen as phenomenological and deconstructed text as interpreted by Pinar & Reynolds (1992).

Because of the intensive schedule, the greatest degree of change appeared on Tuesday schedules over years 1 and 2 (see Appendix 1.). In a comparison of Tuesday schedules provides an example of the "occurent" change (Feldman, 1995). A comparison of Tuesday Year 1 and Tuesday Year 2 documents our "cross course analysis" (Hollingsworth, 1990).

Analysis of the effects of practice from student perspectives was derived from written reflective papers called "Process Papers." In these papers, participants reflected upon their daily journals and experiences throughout the seminar. Structured journal time had been set aside during the seminars for this purpose. Summative evaluations from both years 1 and 2 also provided data on participants' experiences and perspectives.

Findings

Introduction

As educators, we must make decisions in the moment constantly in order to act in our function and role. In this role, most of our decision-making processes, while cognitively dynamic, are generally tacit unless we articulate our cognitive processing. The dynamic processes in action (beside our plans and objectives which are often substantiated) could be perceptual through any number of lenses, responsive weighing various courses of action, reflective or interpretive of one's response in action, evaluative of the effectiveness of those responses and interpretations, or even corrective if we feel there is a preferable perception, response, or interpretation. While these actions must be executed "in the moment," their complexity remains largely "invisible" or private.

Because we collaborated in the instruction of a seminar, many of the decisions we made as instructors were, rather than remaining tacit, discussed in a variety of conversations. Because we felt a need to explore our own understanding of democratic practice, we devoted the effort and time that would go "unseen" or "unheard" in an individual teaching situation to conversations

about our goals, our plans, our actions, our interpretations, our responses, our reflections upon these, our evaluations, and our corrections. Therefore, the processes described in our findings should feel very familiar to educators. The collaborative process is common to many of us who have worked with peers. What may be unique here is the making public of those collaborative processes as applied to the teaching of a course in democratic practice. Located in that context, our central problem was not how to "teach" democratic practice, but how to practice democratic practice and model it in our teaching. In our conversations, we found both the challenge and the support we needed to explore and research that practice in action.

While many of our findings are related directly to the co-construction of a democratic learning community, our premise here is that conversation is a means of research-in-action. In this section, we present findings arising from a variety of conversations. In our section on "reflection-in-action" we present data from one of our reflective conversations in which we were re-interpreting our actions during the week's seminar.

In our section on conversation-as-research, we present conversations that occurred in the context of the democratic learning community. These were conversations that emerged from within various participatory structures characteristic of a democratic classroom, but that were not planned or introduced, they were simply issues that arose out of an exploration of democratic practice. These demanded responses in our teaching.

In our section on teaching-as-research, we tell a story of a powerful example of what occurred when we shared a decision with the student-participants. We had to make a decision not to act as the sole purveyors of power in the emerging democratic learning community. In doing this, we had to trust that the participants would weigh all that we would weigh in a decision, but we had no idea what the outcome would be.

Finally, in our section on research-in-action, we describe changes we made in curriculum to further our own and our co-participants' understanding and experience of democratic practice. To demonstrate this, we use sample syllabi as artifacts of some of the adjustments made between planning and execution. Naturally, these were not what finally occurred in either case; our final executions varied even from our revised plans in order to meet participant needs.

Reflection-in-action

From our prior experiences in secondary and teacher education classrooms, we had found that the element of trusting students was the most critical element in our practice. That practice preceded our decision to conduct the course together. After sharing our experiences in conversations over an eighteen month period, Susan proposed that we collaborate to instruct the

course during the following summer[4]. Although we were familiar with one another's work, neither of us had ever collaborated in teaching a course with this intensity, either together or with any other colleague. Therefore the "leap of faith" and trust required to enter into this collaboration were critical to its outcomes.

Words like "Trust" and "Faith" have become dangerous words in educational settings. But for a democratic society, these elements of social and political life are essential; there can be no democracy without the bedrock foundation of trust. Because trust is the essential glue of a democratic society, it cannot be assumed in the context of a course on democratic teaching practice; it must be made explicit. In the Community-building component of the course, we prefaced our first morning's activities with comments about the critical role of trust.

In one of our reflective conversations, we evaluated the necessity of making "trust" explicit.

> M: I need you to confirm--I think I said something about trust in the very bginning about trust and how we communicated a trust in the process. I think I came in and said, "The most important part of this--to be able to achieve democratic practice in your own practice is to trust the process. Susan & I trust that this group will be able to move toward creating a democratic community. And sometimes it's going to be hard, and we'll have crises of faith, and we know that that's going to happen. But we also know that we trust the group and in democratic practice, that's the most important thing--being able to trust your students.
>
> S: That's what you said, and in the crises of faith, you also said you knew this was going to happen, and you brought it up at the end as well. But as you discussed that the first day, they have no clue what you're talking about, because they haven't experienced it yet. And this really ties in with experiential learning. What you said, they hear, but it doesn't attach itself to any meaning at that point. Whereas as we developed building community and building trust--exercises of building trust, we work on that. We spend a whole day and a half to two days building trust![5]

We understood "crises of faith" because we had experienced them ourselves. As we stated above, it took a "leap of faith" to teach this course together, knowing the degree of commitment to process it would take. During the week, each of us as instructors had a crisis of faith. Yet we were asking the other participants to trust the learning community, and we had to be willing to do that ourselves. This was facilitated by our collaboration.

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[4] A course entitled "Democratic Classrooms" had been offered as a seminar through ESR (Educators for Social Responsibility) with an interest in attracting practicing teachers in the University of Massachusetts/Amherst region. In 1989, the course was led by ESR instructor Gene Thompson and her colleague at the university, Seth Kreisberg. In 1990 and 1991, the course was taught by ESR faculty Keith Grove, Steven Weimar, and Larry Dieringer.

[5] Two days in this seminar translates to roughly twelve hours of class time since the seminar was conducted as an eight-to-five week-long course.

When student participants were invited to assume leadership roles, there was widespread hesitation, discomfort, and criticism. This critical juncture has been identified by some as "resistance" (Giroux, 1986, 1988; Erickson, 1986). But we came to interpret these projections of internal conflicts and fears about shifts in power as "crises of faith" which manifested for different individuals at different times with the greatest concentration occurring just prior to the mid-point. This critical juncture was the most stressful for student and instructors participants alike.

Without intense and concentrated conversation, the conflict resolution, problem-solving, and adjustments necessary to address these stresses might have resulted in a dismissal of participant responses as "resistance" and possible abandonment of the goal of a "democratic dynamic" process. Indeed, individual participants in crisis engaged in conversations with instructors during their crises of faith. In general, these conversations reflected fears about trusting mere colleagues as opposed to trusting "instructors." Such shifts are reflective of children's' so-called "resistance," but students generally express their crises less in conversation, and more in behavioral outbursts.

Therefore, the conversational interpretation and interventions during the critical juncture were seen as central. Thus conversation was the medium of both the co-construction of the democratic dynamic and of the research-in-action. The instructors had had experience in the use of various democratic practices in other teacher education seminars, and one of the instructors had used democratic practices in high school classes, and had been trained as a mediator in conflict resolution. Their prior experience gave the instructors confidence in the participants, and this type of confidence was largely and often reflected back to the participants in crisis.

S: I remember--who was it that had the conflict resolution course?
M: Who dropped out--yeah
S: Who dropped out--yeah. I mean that, that blew me away. That got me nervous. That really got me very nervous. But you didn't seem nervous at all with that. I had a problem with that. I thought, "Oh-oh, how are we going to deal with that crisis, because this really changes the structure of the group?"
M: Well, I knew where she was coming from. She was coming right off this mediation course, and then she was jumping right into ours the next day. So she had been in this comfortable group doing conflict resolution, and she hadn't fully disengaged from that yet, and we were taking a totally different approach. It's very different, because mediation is focused on just one thing--resolution!

So here, we were asking her to deal with a whole group....I mean a standard mediation training is all simulations. We weren't doing simulations, we were doin' the real thing! And in this situation, we couldn't promise that, because we weren't practicing mediation per se, we were practicing an open dialogue. And sometimes you're gonna disagree with people who are speaking. That's a lot more threatening.

S: That was...the part, y'know, I really remember, where I lost the con--I had a crisis of faith. But then you pulled me through that. And then, I remember Thursday, when everything was--they were working in their groups, and everybody was--I thought, "this is all working!"--you came up to me and said, "I don't know what's going on! I'm not sure this is gonna--" I said, "Marsha, look what's happening! They're all--look at them--they've got their presentations, they're doing their thing--we're sittin' on the side!" And you go, "Yeah, we are!" (both laugh) "It is working! We are on the side! It has worked!"

M: But I think that 'on the side' part is where I get nervous. Right? Because suddenly I'm not there. I'm on the side! And so I panic--at that point, because I think, "Oh, jeez, I'm not controlling this!" So that's why I have my crisis of faith there.

S: I see, okay. So that's where you--okay. See, I'm trying to get people over the hump, and you--that's interesting. Again--so that's the benefit of working and collaborating.

M: Yeah!

S: The fact that as we go through the process of this, and issues related to the crisis of faith--but other things, too. I mean, that's one piece of it, but the other piece is like, "What are they ready for?" We take a look at what we have outlined, and it's continuously

M: shifting and adjusting--yeah

S: --Should we do it this way? And that dialogue is really important, too--to kind of read the students--where are they at?...y'know?--they want to "play school." Let's let them play school, y'know, and we had that dialogue. That wasn't planned at all.

M: No, that's true. We moved the discussion of the readings to Wednesday morning so we could play school. That's a good example of how we dealt with resistance and crises of faith from a number of participants at one time.

I remember. It was Tuesday night, people were droppin' like flies--they were coming apart at the seams--it was "too much work. You're the teacher, you should be telling us what to do"--that kind of thing, and we were feeling that, and that's when we decided, "Okay. Let's play school. We all know how to play school." So first thing Wednesday morning we discussed the readings and played school so we could give them that comfort level that you wanted to give them. I remember that because you were afraid they were gonna lose it. And we gave them the comfort level. And then we turned it out to them, and said, "So--?" And we asked them if they could reflect on the difference, 'cause we played school for like an hour.

S: Yeah, and they were the ones who said, "We get it now. Stop it." They wanted it back. It was just that tension of wanting the power but not responsibility. But then they wanted it.

In this conversation, as we reflected on our week, we came to understand the function of these crises of faith and how central they were to returning to community. In our conversations,

we learned to trust one another's perceptions and strategies. These became our analogies for opportunities to reinforce trust to the learning community. Through the process of meeting the crises, we took the risk that the participants might decide to "go back to the book." We knew we would have to honor that decision. We had learned that we had to trust the community as well.

One of the gauges of whether we have achieved a democratic learning community we have observed is whether the participants challenge the instructors, i.e. "the authorities" regarding policy. In Year 1, on Wednesday morning, just after we had "played school"--a simple return to a familiar ritual--the challenge came in the form of the timely and critical question, "What happens if the students decide democratically to go back to the way it was?" The question, while hypothetical, expressed 'where the participants were' in their "resistance" or crisis.

Susan's immediate response was, "Then you have to honor that. What else can you do? Say, 'No, we're going to run this democratically?'" (Process Paper, M. Alibrandi, 1992). This way, we were able to reflect our own struggle over the critical issue of trust in the community as central to democratic practice. The other tension implicit in this incident was the constant balance of content and method. The student participants had expressed the need to balance "process" with content, and we as instructors had to respond to that need.

Conversation-as-research

One of the critical conversations to emerge in the context of the Class Meeting component in both years 1 and 2 was a conversation about "Democracy." At an early point in their own reflections and conversation, the participants raised this issue. Generally, the conversation about "Democracy" took the form of a search for definitions and conceptions of democracy. In each year, the participants heard and found that there were too many perspectives on "Democracy" to attempt to adopt a single definition, even as a working definition. As instructors, we did not raise the issue of "Democracy" (capitol "D") *per se* in the context of Class Meetings. Class meeting topics and agendas were set by the participants. In both years, the topic emerged out of other issues and discussions.

One teacher wrote in her journal about this process:

> *...quickly we moved into the "majority rules mentality" when it came time to make decisions.... I was also struck by the fact that consensus really works to include all voices in a community whereas majority voting creates a minority population which is basically ignored.... Going through the process of building a democratic community has shown me that... approaching group decisions with a consensus mentality and avoiding the separatist functions of leaders and experts can move us beyond "your way" and "my way" to "our way".*

It was within these conversations about "Democracy" that the participants raised questions about whether, we were succeeding in establishing a "true democracy" in our own class.

Challenges to the instructors were raised within these conversations, and issues such as whether or not the participants had the power to elect not to turn in a final paper raised intense controversy. These were of particular interest to the practicing teachers who were concerned about the limits of democratic practice with children. The problem of how far would, should, or could they go in sharing power in their own classrooms was tested within the framework of the teacher education course. This we felt was positive evidence of the course's community-building and democratic process--where challenges to its own structure were tested, tolerated, and met with responsive action.[6]

Thus the "Democracy" conversation in content resembles that of researcher Susan Noffke et al (1995) in which participants in a teacher education course discussed critical and controversial issues of democratic schooling. But it also raises pedagogical issues in the context of a course on Democratic Pedagogy

Conversations about Equity

In both years 1 and 2, in the context of Class Meetings, participants spent much of their time developing strategies to equitably balance participation. In each year, a solution of a time limit was reached. A role of Timekeeper was designed to keep participation equitable and not focused on the agendas of certain individuals.

For example, in our democratic education class when we began having class meetings, we found that discussion on one topic continued to monopolize the entire time. After the first, painfully long meeting, the group recognized the need to monitor their time on each topic. A shy, soft-spoken first grade teacher volunteered to be the timekeeper, a role that proved to be crucial to the process. Her manner of participation was particularly noteworthy; she disclosed to the group that she never wore a watch in her normal routine, and now she brought one to each class meeting. In her journal she wrote:

> *In my teaching, I consciously accept each child for who she/he is. There are several children for whom leadership roles, roles of power and authority, are not comfortable. As their teacher, the important thing for me is to make them feel wanted and important and an integral member of the community.... Yet for myself I have another standard. I have thought I should be different. I should be more verbal, more powerful with my peers. Why? I saw this week that I can still be an important and involved member of in the democratic community.*

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[6] The controversy about the final paper also raised the issue between the two instructors, both within the Class Meeting and creating a need for conversation and conflict resolution between the instructors after Class Meeting. But the issue of final paper or not was resolved within the context of Class Meeting.

Conversations in Small Groups: Gender Issues

In order to give participants spaces in which to practice outside of the "official dialogue" of the class (no matter how open it might be), the small collaborative groups had a dialogic relationship with the large group. Especially in Year 1, and later on in the process in Year 2, women in the class became aware and articulate about the need to balance leadership roles between males and females; in particular Class Meeting Moderator. In both years, the issue was addressed only after a gender issue conflict had arisen. The issues were raised by women and the solutions chosen were usually negotiated by women privately in caucus before being presented to the Class Meeting as a whole. The woman who finally spoke for the caucus put it this way in her journal:

> *I was determined that no additional time would be devoted exclusively to [a single person]. The omnipotent "Women's Caucus Room" eliminated my anxiety. Five women from the group had made the same resolution. Even though I was free to speak honestly in the group, I did not feel empowered until I knew I was supported by others....It is difficult to be the dissenter in a group...Feelings of safety and empowerment must be worked at and personally earned by each individual at their own pace.*

Once this participant raised gender issues in the context of Class Meeting, gender issues became a focus for further investigation and exploration. Women in the class decided to take equitably distributed turns at moderating Class Meetings. We addressed gender issues in the context of large group discussions, and one collaborative group selected it as their presentation topic. One of the men in the class reflected upon the value of the small collaborative groups this way:

> *Perhaps the most enjoyable of all the activities were the collaborative groups. Small groups formed on the basis of interest in a given area. My group chose gender issues. We worked harmoniously in creating our activity, each member contributing actively to the process. I learned much about subtle gender issues through LA's observations...and I was grateful to her for opening my eyes to areas of gender bias I had not noticed.*

Teaching-as-Research: A Year 2 Story

In Year 2, a compelling challenge to us in our role as "teachers" arrived unexpectedly. This story is a true one, though we use pseudonyms in the retelling. More than just a "teachable moment," although it certainly was that, the incident provided us with a real opportunity to share responsibility with the participants as again, we put our trust in the democratic learning community.

"Harry" and Kari

After a long day of community building, challenging our definitions of democratic practices both in and out of schools, the instructors set out for an evening of reflection and conversation about the events of the day. At about 7:00 PM the phone rang and a man asked to speak with the instructor(s). Introducing himself as "Harry," he apologized for missing the first day of a five- day course. He wanted to know if he could join our class the following day. Each of us spoke briefly with him and agreed to discuss his situation that evening. Marsha recognized his accent as West African.

Exhausted, yet enthusiastic, we began our planning for the next day's events (something we would do every evening for the next three days). Our issue with admitting "Harry" in the class was not an easy one. First, he had already missed 20% of the course, and the first day centering on "community building" was crucial to the process of democratic practice. Yet, inclusion within our learning community was part of the process as well. Through our conversation, we realized that we should not make this decision alone as instructors; in terms of "sharing power" it was a decision for all of us. After all, as democratic practice, we believed that this issue provided the students with a real opportunity to participate in decision making that affected their "community." We also felt that making a unilateral decision about a new member of the class would compromise trust and power dynamics that were central to the democratic learning community, and that without their consent and acceptance, any new member would be stigmatized.

We agreed that this issue would have to be addressed at the beginning of the next day. This necessitated an unanticipated but timely and critical change in the day's agenda--it would be fit in before the "Power Spot" exercise and the conflict resolution session. Meanwhile, we phoned "Harry" to explain that we would need to involve the students in deciding if he could join the class after missing the first day, that it was a matter for a democratic class to decide upon, that the class would have a decision for him by 9:00 AM the next morning, and that Marsha would phone him at that time with the decision.

At 8:00 AM the following morning, the participants entered our classroom chatting with each other about yesterday's activities and the reading assignments. As we greeted them, we announced that an issue needed to be resolved before we could begin our day's work. We told the students about "Harry's" request, and how we thought we should make a decision as a group. The class was silent. The faces that were laughing and relaxed two minutes earlier grew serious. They wanted clarification; were *we* asking *them* if a new student could enter our class? Why didn't we, the instructors, make that decision? Suddenly they also were responsible for constructing their class "community."

Issues about fairness, missing one-fifth of the class, and Monday's work of community building were discussed by the class. At first it didn't look like "Harry" would be included as a member. Then one young woman, who had been quiet during this lively discussion, raised the question that if we were attempting to be a "democratic community" wasn't inclusion an important component? Her critical question shifted the discussion to admitting "Harry" if he would do something to "make up" the work he had missed.

At 8:45 AM time was running out; we needed to bring this issue to closure. The question now raised to the class was: "Should we allow Harry to participate in our class (with a make-up assignment) or should we not admit Harry in the class?" Because of the time limit, the participants used secret ballots, but there really was no need. It was unanimous; "Harry" would be admitted and welcomed as a new member of our class. At 9:01 a.m. Marsha left the room to call "Harry" and give him the news. Smiles once again appeared and lively conversation and laughter filled the room.

After Marsha left to make the phone call, Susan began introducing the "Power Spot" activity to the class. The purpose of this exercise was to explore how power might be conceptualized as a sharing and cooperative process. The class formed a large circle and participants were asked to raise their hands, touching the palms of the people on either side of them. As we stood in our circle, poised palm-to-palm, a black woman entered the room, put down her books and asked in a West African accent, "May I join you?" We all looked at each other and then someone in the group broke the circle as "Kari" joined our activity.

Just as the class finished the activity, Marsha re-entered the class, frustrated that she had been unable to reach "Harry." One of the class members leaned forward in the circle and asked, "Marsha, have you met Kari?" S. Seigel journal).

We never did determine "Harry" and Kari's relationship; it remained a mystery to us all. But the outcome of having shared the decision, and having Kari welcomed as a conscious decision we felt was most consistent for the preservation of "community."

Research-in-action

As we constantly assessed the progress of the development of community in each of the seminars, we consulted and solved problems, adjusting and adapting our curriculum as has been demonstrated in some of the foregoing findings. While adjustments and refinements are an intrinsic part of all responsive teaching, we recall that because of the dynamic nature of this seminar, no matter how many times we might teach it, the adjustments would be necessary.

While we came to view certain conversations as common concerns; "What is Democracy?," equitable participation, and gender issues, we could not predict whether, when, why, or where those issues might arise with any other group. Certainly the required readings framed and inspired discussions of certain issues, but the individuals in a group, and the group's dynamics are of course their own. Instead, what we have found regarding our research-in-action is that we have made adjustments to, as John Elliott put it, improve "the quality of action within it" (1991).

As documentation of the changes we made to improve our action, we submit the various Tuesday schedules in Appendix A; before and later versions of Tuesday, Year 1, and before and later versions of Tuesday, Year 2. In the aforementioned, we have described the major changes we made in each year. That is, in Year 1, the Wednesday morning "School Time" session in which we returned to a familiar "school" type of ritual activity, and Year 2's 'special class meeting' to decide on "Harry's" joining the class.

Between Years 1 and 2, the most substantive change was the timing and duration of the conflict resolution component. In Year 1, the timing of the conflict resolution workshop, a three-hour segment, occurred after many individuals had experienced their crises of faith. In an effort to provide some basic understanding and skill regarding conflict, the conflict resolution workshop was slated for an earlier slot in the overall schedule for Year 2. We felt that there were benefits in Year 2 having provided an awareness and some practice in conflict resolution and mediation skills earlier in the syllabus.

The inclusion of an experiential conflict resolution component (Davis & Salem, 1985; etc. etc.) is indicated as a means toward group problem-solving and decision-making. This critical component was moved to precede and support the transfer of power. The essential trust which must exist for the group to sustain its members through various "crises of faith" was most critical, and this trust was tested by our ability to "fight gracefully" (Peck, 1987). These findings reinforced the need to include "community-building" activities in combination with frequent and varied participation and communication modes.

Conclusions

The most significant change in the instructors' practice between years a 1 and 2 were 1) the ordering and weight of the conflict resolution component; 2) making explicit both the theory and the practice of sociolinguistic strategies such as Talking Stick, Walk and Talk, and other structured modes; and 3) anticipating "crises of faith" as the shift of power from instructors to participants drew nearer.

Regarding conversation as research-in-action, we conclude that 1) collaborative instruction was critical; 2) that conversation was largely the medium for negotiated change, hypothesis-testing

and collaborative experiment design: and 3) certain critical conversations in the context of the seminar were central to the development of a democratic learning community.

Educational Significance of the Study

Many have called for education in democratic practice in schools, but in the authors' experience, few pre-service or in-service teachers have had the benefit of such an educational experience. Therefore, the development of teacher education for democratic practice (Novak, 1994; Wood, 1988; Kelly, 1994; Berman and LaFarge, 1993) seems the logical first step in such a process.

In earlier investigations of power relations in educational settings, there has been an identification of behaviors as manifested "resistance" (Erickson, 1986; Giroux, 1986, 1988). In the teacher education seminar setting, "resistance" was seen rather as the "crisis of faith" individuals experienced when their preconceptions of power relations and responsibility were challenged by the co-construction of a democratic dynamic. In practice, the manifestations of "resistance" were seen as opportunities for redirecting trust in a learning community, and for skill development in conflict resolution (Johnson & Johnson, 1991).

As co-instructors, we highly valued our own collaboration in practicing democratic teacher education, and found that their conversations as research-in-action was essential to the "occurent" problem-solving and decision-making required in the dialogic democratic teacher education seminar.

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Tuesday, July 14

Topic: Power in Relationships

Understanding and Meeting Resistance
Democratic Classroom Management

Readings: 'The Question of Power' from Sometimes a Shining Moment, Elliot Wigginton, pp. 196-198

'Empowerment and Collaborative and Cooperative Learning: Redefining Power in the Classroom', Seth Kreisberg, paper presented at AERA in 1989

'Mapping Terrains of Power: Student Cultural Knowledge Versus Classroom Knowledge', Christine Sleeter and Carl Grant, from Empowerment through Multicultural Education, pp. 49-67

Block A: Community Building (Facilitator: Susan)

Activity 'Power Spot': Power/Individual vs Group goals

Observer _____ (diagram)

Fishbowl

Discussion of Readings

Small group discussion of educational practices related to readings

Activity: 'Pass the talking stick'

Break

Block B: Developing the Class Agenda (Facilitator: Marsha)

Observer: Susan
Collaborative Group Planning

Group work on Activity or Session (Lesson Topic / Issue)

Lunch

Block C: Topic: Democratic Leadership/ Democratic Schools

Theme II-3 tape/discussion: Teacher Leadership & Democratic Schools

Readings: 'Caring and Respect: Key Factors in Restructuring a School' Dennis Littky from Democracy and Education (Summer 1988), pp. 3-14

Walk & Talk

Block D:

Journal Writing

Class Meeting

ADD

Year 1

Tuesday, July 14

Topic: Democratic Practices/Decision-Making

Block A: 8:00-9:45 am (Facilitator: Susan)

Observer: _____

Small group discussion of Monday's Reading Assignment

Wrap-up discussion (Fishbowl exercise)

Observer's Report

Walk & Talk (9:30-9:45 am)

Break: 9:45-10:00 am

Block B: 10:00-11:30 am **Developing the Class Agenda** (Facilitator: Marsha)

Collaborative Group Planning

Lunch: 12:00-1:00 pm

Block C: **Class Meeting** 1:00-2:00 pm

Walk & Talk 2:15-2:30 pm

Break: 2:30-2:45 pm

Block D: 2:45-4:00 pm

Community Building (Facilitator: Susan)

Activity 'Power Spot': Power/Individual vs Group goals

Observer _____ (diagram)

Journal Writing

Year 1 Revised

Observer's Report

Wrap up discussion

Tuesday, July 16

Topic: Power in Relationships

Understanding and Meeting Resistance
Democratic Classroom Management

Readings: "The Question of Power" from Sometimes a Shining Moment, Eliot Wigginton, pp. 195-198

"Empowerment and Collaborative and Cooperative Learning: Redefining Power in the Classroom", Seth Kreisberg, paper presented at AERA in 1989

"Mapping Terrains of Power: Student Cultural Knowledge Versus Classroom Knowledge", Christine Sleeter and Carl Grant, from Empowerment through Multicultural Education, pp. 49-67.

"A Democratic Primer: Problem Solving in a Fourth Grade Classroom", Rahima Wade, from Democracy and Education (Summer 1992), pp. 15-19

"Citizenship and Student Power: Some Strategies for the Classroom", Norman Benson, from The Social Studies (May/June 1987)

Block A
Community Building

Activity "Power Spot" Power/Individual vs Group goals

Observer _____ (diagram)

Discussion of Readings

Small group discussion of educational practices related to readings

Break

Block B
Observer: Susan
Collaborative Group Planning

Group work on Activity or Session

Lunch

Block C
Topic: Democratic Schools (Thayer H.S) tape/discussion and visitor?

Readings: "Caring and Respect: Key Factors in Restructuring a School", Dennis Littky from Democracy and Education (Summer 1990), pp. 3-14

Block D
Journal Time

Class Meeting

Year 2 Tues.

Observer's Report

Wrap up discussion

Tuesday, July 16

Readings: "The Question of Power" from Sometimes a Shining Moment, Eliot Wigginton, pp. 195-198
"Power With: Toward an Alternative Conception of Power" from Transforming Power, Domination, Empowerment, and Education, Seth Kreisberg, pp. 55-90
"A Democratic Primer: Problem Solving in a Fourth Grade Classroom", Rahima Wade, from Democracy and Education (Summer 1992), pp. 15-19
"Caring and Respect: Key Factors in Restructuring a School", Dennis Littky from Democracy and Education (Summer 1990), pp. 3-14

Block A
Community Building

Activity "Power Spot" Power/Individual vs Group goals

Observer: _____ (diagram)

Discussion of Readings

Small group discussion of educational practices related to readings

Break

Block B

Observer: Susan
Collaborative Group Planning

Group work on Activity or Session

Lunch

Block C

Topic: Democratic Schools (Thayer H.S) tape/discussion and visitor?

Block D

Journal Time

Class Meeting

Year 2 Tues. Revised